

COUNCIL

Minutes of the one hundred and twenty-fourth of Council held on Wednesday 29 March 2017 at 10.00 am in Room 115, 1st Floor, CCEA HQ, 29 Clarendon Road, Belfast, BT1 3BG.

Present:

Mr T Carson (Chair)	Mrs C Harpur
Mr C McKinney	Mr R Thompson
Dr L Caul	Mrs K O'Hare
Mr T Armstrong	Dr A Kerr
Dr N Morton	Mrs A Whiteside
Mrs C Fitzsimons	

Mr J Edwards (Chief Executive)
Mr R Hanna (Director of Education Strategy)
Mrs S McClelland (Interim Director of Corporate Services)
Mr J Daly (Financial Services Manager)

Miss N Kennedy (Manager, Council Secretariat)

Introduction

The Chair welcomed members and officers to the meeting, in particular Mr Cormac McKinney, newly appointed Council member. Mr Brian Wilson has also been appointed to the Council.

1 Apologies

Apologies were received from Mrs R Cowan and Mr B Wilson.

2 Declaration of Interests

Members confirmed that there were no conflicts of interests on any of the agenda items.

3 Chair's Business

Council Appointments

The Chair advised that there was one remaining place on Council and a reserve candidate had been put forward for Ministerial approval. Members would be informed once the appointment had been ratified.

Passing of Catherine Coxhead, former Chief Executive, CCEA

The Chair wished to place on record Council's acknowledgement of the passing of Catherine Coxhead, former Chief Executive of CCEA, and her contributions to the work of CCEA.

Recruitment of 2nd Tier Directors Posts

The Chair thanked members for responding to his recent request regarding the panels for the 2nd Tier Directors posts. The composition of the panels would be confirmed as soon as possible.

Tabled Papers

Members noted the tabled papers provided.

Closed Session of Council

The Chair reminded members that a closed session of Council would be convened at the end of normal business.

Chair's Report to Council

The Chair provided an overview on a range of activities undertaken since the last Council meeting.

Meetings with the Chief Executive : The Chair confirmed he continued to meet (on a weekly basis) with the Chief Executive to monitor effectiveness and seek assurances on the operations of the organisation.

Council Development

The Chair confirmed that the feedback from the development session held on 22 February would provide matters for future debate moving forwards.

Governance and Accountability

The Chair advised that he and the Executive Team met with the Permanent Secretary and senior officials on 1 March for the quarterly Governance and Accountability Review. He confirmed that the meeting was conducted in a positive manner with no issues of concern to report. The Permanent Secretary sought assurances on financial management, corporate governance and business performance. He was pleased to report that a high level of confidence in the running of the organisation was recognised.

The Chair confirmed that he had put on record Council's concern regarding the Minister's decision about the availability of GCSE Science specifications in Northern Ireland. This would be progressed once a Minister for Education was appointed.

In regards to the budgetary position, the Chair placed on record his concern at the challenging position the organisation was facing without a confirmed budget allocation for 2017/18.

Clarification was sought on whether Council members would have an opportunity to meet stakeholders. The Chair confirmed that the Permanent Secretary and senior officials would be invited to the next Council meeting.

Members noted the information provided.

Chief Executive's Report

The Chief Executive drew attention to the detail of the report provided for members' information and gave a brief overview on the main areas contained within.

He confirmed that the :

- Corporate Risk Register – year ended 31 March 2017 would be considered by the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee in April and would be issued to Council following approval by DE.
- Annual appraisal of ISO Standards has been completed and CCEA has been re-accredited in all areas with no concerns raised.

Members sought and received clarification on a range of matters relating to the report and were content with the explanations provided.

The Chair thanked members and officers for their input.

FOI Requests

Members noted the most recent FOI requests.

4 Minutes of the previous meeting held on 14 December 2016

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 14 December 2016 were proposed by Mrs Carol Fitzsimons and seconded by Mr Robert Thompson as a true and accurate record. A copy was signed by the Chair.

Action Points

Members noted the status of the action points. The Chief Executive confirmed that discussions were ongoing with the IUA with regards to the misunderstanding on the definition of 'applied' qualifications. He confirmed that the decision remained for the 2017 examinations cycle, however they have committed to reviewing their position in 2018. Members would be updated as appropriate.

Record of Council Induction held on 20 January 2017

The record of the Council induction held on 20 January 2017 was proposed by Mrs Carol Fitzsimons and seconded by Mrs Angela Whiteside as a true and accurate record. A copy was signed by the Chair.

Minute of Council Business : Council Development Day : 22 February 2017

The Chair reminded members of the items of business conducted on this occasion. The minute of the Council meeting held on 22 February 2017 was proposed by Mrs Carol Fitzsimons and seconded by Mr Robert Thompson as a true and accurate record. A copy was signed by the Chair.

The Chief Executive confirmed that the decision on the option to extend GCE Mathematics and Further Mathematics teaching by one year had been welcomed by the sector.

5 Correspondence

Members noted the following correspondence :

- CCEA 2016/18 Main Pay Remit Approval
- CCEA 2017/18 Business Plan
- Computer Based Assessment
- Appointment of new Permanent Secretary (DE)
- Minister's Internal January 2017 Monitoring Exercise: CCEA Budgetary Amendments
- CCEA 2016-18 Top Management Team (TMT) Pay Remit Approval.
- CCEA 2016-18 Business Managers Pay Remit Approval.
- CCEA 2016-17 : New GCSE Development Budget Amendment
- Submission of Draft 2017/18 Business Plan

The Chief Executive drew attention to the letter from Mr D Hughes (DE) re : *Computer Based Assessment*, and advised that the Minister had recognised the service this assessment had provided to the primary sector. It was important that CCEA did not lose this capability and it was possible there could be an opportunity for future work in this area. Members welcomed this.

In regards to the reference in Appendix A (letter from Mr D Savage, Head of Planning and Performance Management (DE) 7 March 2017), the Chief Executive confirmed that the business plan must reference how CCEA intends to contribute to achieving the outcomes in the Children and Young People's Strategy (Children's Services Co-operation Act (NI) 2015), without additional funding.

The Chair confirmed that the Director of Finance (DE) recognised the challenges CCEA was facing with regards to budgetary pressures and agreed he could be approached should any significant concerns arise.

6 Governance and Accountability

Report of the Governance and Accountability Review (GAR) Meeting : 1 March 2017

The Chair confirmed this item had been dealt with earlier on the agenda.

7 Finance

Finance Committee Report : 22 March 2017

In the absence of the Chair of the Finance Committee, the Chair of Council confirmed that members had fulfilled their challenge and scrutiny function on all agenda items. He advised the minutes would be issued once finalised and reported on the following :

- Gary Fair, Finance Director, Department of Education spoke to members on the contents of the letter issued in regards to the 2017/18 Financial Planning. Members welcomed clarification received on matters raised.
- Finance Report as at 31 January 2017 : members noted an underspend of £259K (this included additional income of £24K). Capital expenditure was underspent by 3% at this time. Members were assured that the activation of contingency spend would bring the capital budget in on target by year-end.
- Statement of Financial Position as at 31 January 2017 : no issues of concern were reported.
- Corporate Plan : Monitoring Report : members were content with the information provided.

The above items were also on the agenda for this meeting.

- Pay Remit : members noted the status of the pay remit approvals.
- Procurement and Business Case Update : one procurement has been finalised and awarded by the Education Authority. No live procurements with CPD and no collaborative activity during this reporting period.
- 74 Business Cases were approved between November 2016 and February 2017.
- The Business Case for Confidential Typesetting, printing, packing and despatch of confidential examination question papers was reviewed and approved by the Committee.
- Final Draft of the Digital Strategy was approved by the Committee.

Members noted the information provided.

Cash Draw Down 1 April to 31 July 2017

The Chief Executive confirmed that an initial cash allocation of £13.184M had been received. This would allow the organisation to operate until 31 July 2017. This was separate from the 2017/18 Budget Allocation which had not yet been approved.

Presentation : 2017/18 Financial Planning

The Chief Executive introduced this item and commended the FM on the work carried out to date. He drew attention to the letter from Mr Fair and advised that a series of actions had been taken during the year to anticipate further savings.

The FM gave a detailed presentation (copy provided for members information) highlighting the following :

- Main points arising out of correspondence from DE (15.3.17)
- Scenario 1 and Scenario 2 Proposals

- Summary of main areas
- Reversible Savings

The FM advised that savings already enacted could not be reversed, however, appropriate use of the funds would be made in other areas.

Members agreed the need for representations to continue to be made to DE outlining Council's concerns and stating the challenges should resources not be available for CCEA to retain its effectiveness and fulfil its core statutory responsibilities. They were also content that a summarised scenario response should be put forward to allow flexibility.

Clarification was sought on development visioning for the organisation. The Chair suggested that the Council consider these matters at the June meeting in particular the divergence between jurisdictions and impact of an open market.

Members further discussed and received clarification on a wide range of matters and were content with the explanations provided.

Finance Report as at 31 January 2017

C/124/1

The Financial Services Manager (FM) drew attention to the detail provided in paper ***C/124/1*** and reported an underspend of £259K (1.4%). Excluding additional income of £24K, the underspend is £234K (0.9%), inside the DE target of 1%. With regards to capital expenditure, the FM reported an underspend of 3.0%. Members noted plans had been put in place to bring the capital budget in on target by year end.

Members noted the areas of main underspend and the summary provided on budget updates, in particular the January monitoring round.

The Chief Executive provided an overview on the impact of increased examination entries and the pressure points for payments. He confirmed that all increased income is handed back to DE and additional funding has to be bid for using the approved processes.

Members sought and received clarification on a range of matters. The challenges were recognised and the Chair asked the Chief Executive to ensure the budget was managed robustly through to year end.

Statement of Financial Position as at 31 January 2017

C/124/2

Members noted the information provided.

Management Statement/Financial Memorandum

C /124/3

The Chair advised that this item was for information only. He confirmed that the next formal review would take place during 2019/2020, however, DE has been approached with a request to update the document as some of the terminology is now out of date.

Corporate Plan : Monitoring Report

C/124/4

The Interim Director of Corporate Services (DoCS) drew attention to the information provided and advised on the three objectives that had not been received during this quarter.

Members noted the information provided.

Draft CCEA Departmental Business Plan 2017/18

C/124/5

The Chief Executive introduced this item and explained that the Department of Education (DE) require CCEA to contribute to their Business Plan. He confirmed that account had been taken to the items raised in D Savage's letter of 7 March 2017.

A Council member asked that consideration be given to cross-referencing the terminology used in the MSFM with that used in the Business Plan. The Chair asked the Executive Team to note this comment.

The Chief Executive explained that as per the MSFM CCEA must be instructed by DE to review the draft Corporate Plan, however, at this time, the requirement is for CCEA to write the Business Plan to coincide with the Programme for Government (PfG).

8 Audit

Audit and Risk Assurance Committee Report : 18 January 2017

Dr Caul, incoming Chair of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee, drew members' attention to the detail of the minutes and provided a summary of the main items discussed. These were :

- Risk Assurance in Awards and Purchases : October to November 2016 : two unauthorised purchases reported and no areas of concern on Direct Award Contracts.
- 2016/17 National Fraud Initiative : CCEA's participation in this exercise is mandatory. Information requested has been submitted. An update will be provided at the June meeting once the matching exercise has been completed.
- 2016/17 Annual Report and Accounts Timelines : members noted the timelines for the production of the report.
- Corporate Risk Register 31 December 2016 : members were content with the information provided.
- Internal Audit Activity: Three documents were provided to the committee for review and recommendation to Council. These were on the agenda for this Council meeting.

- Exemplar of Risk Management : An overview on risk management within CCEA was provided and an exemplar risk (from inception) was discussed. Members found this helpful and commended the detailed way in which risks are managed.
- Qualifications Operational Readiness for November 2016 Examinations Series : No high category risks or areas of concern were reported.
- Computer Based Assessment, Realisation of Risk : members noted the information received and were content with the remedial action taken in regards to the error which occurred in December 2016. A full report is on the agenda for this Council meeting.
- Interim Management Arrangements for Qualifications – Risk Management Report : members were content with the proposal that additional, part-time support would be brought in to assist the Chief Executive with extra responsibilities and mitigate against risks within the summer examinations.

Dr Caul advised that following the meeting he had received communication from the outgoing Chair regarding the interim management arrangements for qualifications. He advised that the matter had been closed and concluded that matters of note should be raised in committee. He confirmed that there was confidence in this decision.

This concluded the report for the Audit & Risk Assurance Committee.

Internal Audit Charter and Strategy

C/124/6

The Chief Executive advised that the Internal Audit Strategy (C/124/6a) and Internal Audit Strategy 2016-19 (C/124/6b) had been considered and recommended to Council for ratification.

He confirmed that, to date, he was content with the professional manner Moore Stephens conducted their business. The Chair of Council concurred with this.

Internal Audit Charter

C/124/6a

The Chief Executive provided a brief overview of the purpose of the Charter.

Members were content with the level of detail provided and formally ratified the document.

Internal Audit Strategy 2016-19

C/124/6b

The Chief Executive provided a brief overview of the areas of work outlined in the 3-year strategy and confirmed that should changes be required, these can be reviewed through the Audit & Risk Assurance Committee.

Members were content with the level of detail provided and formally ratified the document.

9 Regulation

Draft GCSE Grading Communications Plan

C/124/7

The Chief Executive drew attention to the detail of the information provided at paper C/124/7 and confirmed that the work was being taken forward by the Regulation Unit in association with Marketing and Communications. He outlined the content of the document and advised that this was a working draft.

Members welcomed the draft and, following discussion, made the following suggestions :

- The draft to go through Plain English proofing;
- The following stakeholders to be added : Department of Agriculture, Agricultural College (CAFRE)
- Full range of Government Departments;
- The inclusion of parents, guardians and learners.

The Chief Executive advised that CCEA had been invited to sit as an observer on the Northern Ireland Commission for Children and Young People's Education Group. He agreed to take the suggestions on board.

Revision of Specifications

C/124/8

The Chief Executive drew attention to the detail provided in paper **C/124/8** and confirmed that all 38 specifications have been accredited. He advised that the last phase was now underway with a series of support events being held for teachers. The completion of support materials are also well underway with information scheduled to be in schools on time.

Members sought clarification on a number of matters including the move from old specifications to new, in particular Mathematics. The Chief Executive advised that additional support events were being organised to support schools with the double move and further assistance would be provided as required. He confirmed that the decision to postpone the introduction of the new A Level Mathematics and Additional Mathematics specifications for one year was to help alleviate pressures on centres.

10 Education

Education Committee Report : 8 February 2017

The Chair of the Education Committee drew attention to the minutes previously circulated and tabled for members' information. He advised that two new representatives from the Primary Sector have joined the committee and were present at the meeting on 8 February.

The main agenda items were as follows :

- Presentation from Joan Cassells, DE's 14-19 Curriculum Entitlement Team on the Careers Advisory Forum.
- Briefing from Michael Gould, Department for the Economy, on the provision of Professional and Technical Qualifications across the 4 jurisdictions.

Both inputs were well received and stimulated good debate amongst members.

- Regulatory Entitlement : Post-16 Skills Plan : an overview of the main areas of the plan was presented and implications for Northern Ireland discussed. Developments will be monitored and future work brought back to the Committee as appropriate.
- Baseline for Qualifications Credit Framework (QCF) : an overview of the update on qualifications offered by CCEA on the QCF was provided. Concern was expressed at the lack of uptake on some subjects. It was suggested that a strategy for Professional and Technical qualifications be developed.
- GCSE Science : Review of Assessment Opportunities for Single and Double Award Science: the proposal to reduce the number of assessment opportunities was discussed and concern was expressed that to reduce these could demotivate students and remove opportunities for formative feedback. Members of the Committee recognised the need for a compromise and referred the matter to Council for further consideration. The item is on the agenda for this meeting.
- Options to Extend GCSE Mathematics First Teaching by One Year : members welcomed this proposed and recommended it to Council for consideration and ratification.

Subsequently Council considered and formally approved the proposal on 22 February 2017.

This concluded the report of the Education Committee.

CBA Exception Report

C/124/9

The Director of Education Strategy (DoES) drew attention to the detail provided in paper ***C/124/9*** and provided a brief overview of the report.

Following clarification of a minor matter, members were content with the information provided.

GCSE Science : Review of Assessment Opportunities for GCSE Single Award and Double Award Science

C/124/10

The Chief Executive drew attention to paper ***C/124/10*** and provided some background information to the proposal to reduce the number of assessment opportunities. He advised that the analysis from the Awarding Organisation (AO) show that the outcomes neither advantage nor disadvantage learners.

The Chief Executive advised of the complexities of the technical challenges due to the decision on GCSE grading changes and provided a detailed briefing on the reasons for the proposals being brought to Council.

Some Council members, who also sat on the Education Committee expressed serious concern and caution about this proposal. The main concerns were :

- Disadvantage and damage to the morale of learners;
- Challenges for curriculum and planning of 3 full subjects over 2 GCSEs
- The need to ensure learners are facilitated; and
- Possibility of moving from modular to linear.

The Chair of the Education Committee agreed that the extent and depth of debate at the meeting was significant. He recognised that there was no appetite to move to linear and the complexities around the introduction of new grade boundaries. He agreed that a balance was required to ensure the integrity of the examination was not compromised.

The Chief Executive asked that a resolution be sought as soon as possible to allow changes to be made to the system in regards to the GCSE grade changes.

The Chair of Council, whilst recognising the concerns expressed and the complexities of the matter agreed to discuss this matter further with the Chief Executive. He confirmed a revised paper outlining a preferred resolution would be issued to Council.

Consultation Response : GTCNI

C/124/11

Members noted the information provided.

11 Any Other Business

None identified.

12 Date of Next Meeting

The Chair confirmed that the next meeting of Council would take place on Wednesday 21 June 2017 at 10.00 am.

He thanked members and officers for their contributions to the meeting.

